



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Divided

Fresh spell of uncertainty in politics

■ nf correspondent

A division among the major coalition partners in parliament during the Sunday voting was fraught with fears of shattering the two-year old peace process as well as the life of the present government headed by GP Koirala.

Frequent and unscheduled adjournments of parliament sessions, a series of intermittent satellite meetings among the top leaders of the three parties failed to inject any pragmatic flexibility to save the crucial unity and avoid division.

And the natural consequence followed. The House saw a three way

division. The Maoist and UML voted as a block in favour of immediate republican Nepal and the proportional representation system and the Congress party going against the resolution. The smaller left parties chose not to side with any blocks during the voting—all this indicating possibility of new political polarisation. Koirala, in his brief speech, however, appealed to all to maintain the unity. He chose not to vote himself claiming that as leader of the House, he would not side with any group. But his congress party voted against the two proposals.

There are growing speculations that Sunday's voting in the House and parting of ways of the coalition partners might push the left groups and the Congress party apart. The biggest headache for the Congress and especially for Koirala, is the established loss of majority as shown by the voting. Prachanda had been insisting during the previous meetings that the Left leaders should explore an alternative leadership in the government in the chanted context.

Following the division, Koirala's government only continues technically as the UML moved amendment in favour of a Republican Nepal and that in favour of the proportional representation system clearly bagged the majority support. However, the motions fell as their adoption would need two thirds of support of the members present and voting in the House. The UML and the Maoists together have 167 members. All the 135 plus members of the Congress

endorsed the party line, that despite their support to the republican agenda, they were in favour of the issue being left to the constituent assembly to be elected.

In a dramatic turn of events on Friday night, Speaker Subhash Nembwang adjourned the House after the 'voting papers' had been distributed among the members, and three main parties presented their rigid lines. But hectic formal and informal parleys on Saturday and Sunday, and PM's unscheduled rush to the residence of the Madhav Nepal in Koteshwar to save the seven party unity went in vain.

Madhav Nepal had earlier warned Congress leaders Mahesh Acharya and Minendra Rizal that the division might cost Koirala his chair. But political pundits believe the future of the UML, if the politics goes for a new polarisation, might be at risk, as it will have to join the Left coalition as a junior partner since the Maoists have one more member in the house compared to the UML.

There was also a feeble attempt by the Maoists to have PM Koirala declared as a 'working President' on Friday through a House resolution as a proof that the Congress was in favour of the republican system. ■



Celebrating Bura Janko in America. Wife of Carleton S. Coon (ex-US Ambassador to Nepal) being carried on Palanquin.

Elen Coon

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No transgression

Govt extends UNMIN tenure conditionally

■ nf correspondent

Concerned with 'undesirable' activities of the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) that go against the mandate it enjoys, the government of Nepal has refused to concede to its demand for an enlarged role. The government, however, has decided to recommend to the UN Security Council for a year's extended tenure beyond its current spell of January 22 to the mission.

"The government will make it very clear both to the UN Security Council as well as UNMIN Chief Ian Martin that it is not welcome to meddle in Nepal's other problems and will be told to strictly stick to the mandate it has got," an official in the PM's office told newsfront.

Martin who is just back here after briefing the UN Secretary General as well as the UN Security Council about the latest situation in Nepal after the indefinite postponement of the Constituent Assembly elections had solicited an enlarged role for the mission to match the rising expectation of the people.

But Prime Minister GP Koirala, in

consultation with the coalition partners, has come to the conclusion that there was no need for enlarging the scope and jurisdiction of the mission other than managing the arms and armies of the Maoists and the government and observing the election to the CA when it takes place.

Nepal's immediate neighbours, both China and India have made it clear that UNMIN's role and mandate are enough for their work, and they should carry on that successfully within the letter and spirit of the mandate. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) which was a co-signatory along with the government in inviting UNMIN last year however, has reservations about the mission being given a year's extension against an additional six month period it suggested.

"We had clearly told PM Koirala to give another six month extension to UNMIN as we Nepalis must take up the responsibility for running the country after election," Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai told newsfront.

The UN is in favour of setting an early date for election to the constituent assembly, and "we feel that UNMIN should have no role after that," a senior cabinet minister said.

Koirala had taken strong offence to UNMIN directly meeting the leaders of the Janajati groups and various armed groups of Terai, ostensibly seeking its role in the resolution of the problems.

In fact, India has lodged a strong protest with UNMIN having crossed over to the Indian side, along with some Nepali human rights leaders, to meet the leaders of Terai armed groups based in India. But some of the human rights groups which are working in close coordination with UNMIN seem to be in favour of an enlarged mandate for the mission.

"The PM is very clear that the extension would be on condition that UNMIN does not resort to these kinds of activities," the PMO official said. He added that the government from now on would be serious in implementing the earlier agreements related with the peace process.

PM and Prachanda lie about Saha's 'life'

Courage failed Prime Minister GP Koirala and Maoist leader Prachanda as they deliberately chose to miss the deadline they had set to disclose whereabouts of missing journalist Birendra Saha. Their silence only confirmed that Saha was killed within days after being kidnapped by the order of the 'people's government' at Bara.

This challenges Prachanda's claim that the abduction was purely triggered by personal enmity, and was not instructed by the party. But Kundan Phaujdar, now in hiding, claimed in a radio interview that he carried out the abduction by the order of the party and that Saha was handed over to Lal Bahadur Choudhary, head of the local government of the Maoists.

The government's confusion over Saha's fate became apparent when Police Chief, Om Bikram Rana told media on Sunday a vigorous investigation is on to ascertain the whereabouts of the 'kidnapped journalist.' PM Koirala and Prachanda had assured Saha's wife that his condition will be made public within three days, a deadline that expired on November 3.

Phaujdar, a deserter of the Nepal Army who later joined the Maoists,

also gave a hint that he was willing to cooperate in the investigation if others involved in the crime are arrested. But there are fears that frequent announcement by the government to arrest the guilty, and not doing anything about it, is giving them ample time to evade arrests.

There was no instruction issued by the Home Minister till November 3 to arrest those identified as 'kidnappers'. Instead, he chose to conceal the information, that the Maoist leader KB Mahara gave him before the Dashain festival, that Saha was killed by the 'kidnappers' without the party knowing about it.

The demoralised government resorted to use of force and arrested 14 journalists when they sat in Dharna in front of Singha Durbar, Sunday afternoon. At least seven journalists sustained injuries in the attack.



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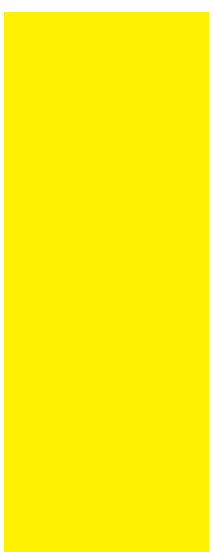
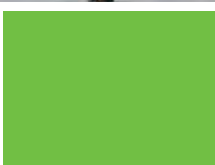
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Newsbrief

Bhattarai meets

Former Prime Minister and the only surviving founder member of the Nepali Congress will now begin interacting with the political activists and general public at his residence regularly, at least five days a week to begin with.

Bhattarai's decision follows requests from a large number of Congress leaders and certain individuals of national eminence that he should be ready guide the nation in crisis, when the present government has failed in all spheres. Those who have spoken in recent days include politicians, youth and student leaders, jurists and teachers.

Sad over the division of the Congress party five years ago, Bhattarai shunned all his political activities. He dissociated from the Congress, a day after the two groups united in September; after his suggestion that the party should pursue the policy of national reconciliation initiated by BP Koirala and Ganeshman Singh, was not even debated in the party forum. "I am prepared to say what I think I must say, and begin meeting the people", Bhattarai told newsfront.

Maoists Red Passport

The Maoist student leaders are also gradually joining the political mainstream, if their inclusion in the foreign junket, sponsored by the western democratic countries, is any indication. Lekhnath Neupane, president of the student wing of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists, is part of a four -member delegation, currently in the United Kingdom.

The trip funded by the British Embassy in Kathmandu includes a round-trip fare and local accommodation. Others in the group are Pradeep Poudel and Kalyan Gurung who belong to the student wing of the Nepali Congress and Ram Kumari Jhakri, leader of the Pro-UML student wing.

The team will be traveling in and out of London and observe how the British democracy is at work. Despite being a close ally of the United States of America, the United Kingdom has not included Nepali Maoists on its terrorist list, and its embassy in Kathmandu interacts with them when necessary.

No reciprocity

The Home Ministry is a bit frustrated with India on few counts. First, the delivery of a fleet of vehicles that the government of India promised to dispatch for the Armed Police force, for the election purpose has been stopped. That seems to be a direct fall out of the government's inability to set a new date for the constituent assembly after the polls slated for November 22 was indefinitely put off.

The second reason is far more serious. The government of India refused to accept Nepal's suggestion that both countries should, on a reciprocal basis, discourage organised crimes and armed activities, political or apolitical, from each other's territory. The suggestion was put forward by Nepal's Home Secretary at a joint meeting to his Indian counterpart last month. His suggestion came in the context of many Terai groups conducting abductions and killing operations in Nepal, with their base in India. Indian response was that the issues these groups have been raising must be addressed politically.

Red passport

The fear that a division in parliament will derail the peace process and push the Maoist leaders back to the jungle appears without any base, at least for the time being.

The Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, instead are preparing to leave for Moscow. "They have already got the red passport which normally only the diplomats and those representing the state possess," an official in the Foreign Ministry told newsfront.

Apart from the two, Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal who studied in the erstwhile Soviet Union has also availed the red passport. There are no words from the Maoists about the impending visit, but it is understood that this is in response to the invitation extended by Upendra Mahato, Chief of the Non-Resident Nepalis Association (NRNA).

Both Prachanda and Bhattarai had assured the NRNA during their recently held international conference in Kathmandu that Maoists were positive towards foreign investment in the infrastructural sector. But doubts about Maoists encouraging proper industrial and investment climate persist.

Sporty and stylish

Morang Auto Works (MAW), the sole authorised distributor of Yamaha unveiled Alba, 'the next generation stylish bike'. The Alba engine is a product of cutting-edge technology and features a 106 cc single cylinder churning out maximum power output and maximum torque, a notch above most bikes in the category. Alba can be started in any gear and offers excellent corner handling. It has wheel base of 1290mm that means more stable and better handling and ground clearance of 173mm that allows its riders comfort even in rough roads. It carries an inbuilt fuel filter in fuel knob.



Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Ellen Sauerbrey addressing a press conference at the American Center in Kathmandu on Saturday.

National government

Yet another political experiment in the offing

As peace process appears uncertain, and the GP Koirala led coalition fast loses its credibility in the eyes of the international community, a move to have an election government is in the offing.

The initiative taken by some people of eminence who are concerned with the failure of the Koirala government to hold elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) twice on schedule favours formation of a national government with a limited mandate, conducting polls on new schedule so that the elected CA could frame a new constitution at the earliest.

A source refusing to disclose details apart from some human rights leaders, former Chief Justice Bishwanath Upadhyay, former speaker Damannath Dhungana, political thinker Nilambar Acharya have endorsed such an idea 'for a limited time frame and purpose'.

A source associated with the move told newsfront that at the moment, they are not discussing who is going to be the PM, but just exploring the possible mandate, role and responsibility of the cabinet if political parties endorse such an idea. "This exercise is not about seeking substitution of the democratic government in which political parties will have a decisive say," he said, adding, "we are



exploring this so that a government with the legitimate mandate of the people can come to the power at the earliest."

Some civil society leaders and legal experts have also come to the conclusion that the person heading the government should have established democratic and nationalist credentials, someone commanding respect among different political parties and with a capability to conduct elections, and who is not going to contest the CA polls. The idea behind the national government is also to have a neutral election

government.

Although, all the major political parties including the Nepali Congress, Maoists and the UML have concluded at the informal level that Koirala as a PM has failed and that it is high time to look for his substitute, there is no collective and formal approach as to what should be the best way to go about it. They have not taken up the issue of the national government yet. "Any move to isolate the political parties or ignore their legitimate role in governance cannot be acceptable for us", says Congress parliamentarian Minendra Rizal.

Nepal-home of the stateless

Nepal has the highest number of stateless people, if the official publication of the United Nations Refugee agency, the UNHCR is to be believed.

The number 147 issue of the refugees, official organ of UNHCR suggests that the number of the stateless people in Nepal stands at 3.4 million people, the home of the highest number of stateless people in the world. In a note, the publication however suggests that the total number has shrunk to the 3.4 million mark as a result of a massive

regularisation exercise.

In the global map, it lists at least 11 countries as the states that host sizeable population at risk of statelessness for which no reliable estimates are available. The countries in this category include India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Turkmenistan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger and Cote d'Ivoire.

But Nepal along with 13 other countries figures in the list of the countries with, 'known stateless population of more than 10,000.' In

the region, Myanmar has about 670,000 people followed by Bangladesh at 300,000, listed as stateless category.

UNHCR does not quite indicate how reliable the statistics are about Nepal, but it admits that only few states have reliable statistics about stateless people. "At the end of 2006, UNHCR was able to identify 5.8 million people having difficulty to establishing nationality in a total of 49 states." It however, believed that the actual number of the stateless people might be closer to 15 million across the world.



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Point to Ponder

The capacity for getting along with our neighbour depends to a large extent on the capacity for getting along with ourselves. The self-respecting individual will try to be as tolerant of his neighbour's shortcomings as he is of his own.

- Eric Hoffer

Refugees' rights

Almost a quarter of a country's population living in forced exile, and the world community's apathy towards it would be considered grossly inhumane. Thus, the initiative by the United States with the support of Australia and Scandinavian countries to rescue Bhutanese or resettle them in the third countries deserves appreciation and support.

But any move to resettle the Bhutanese living in eastern Nepal's refugee camps for more than 16 years now at the cost of their first choice - to go back to their country with their dignity and head held high, will also be seen as the international community bowing down to the tyranny of a regime that has been practicing genocide and ethnic cleansing with impunity.

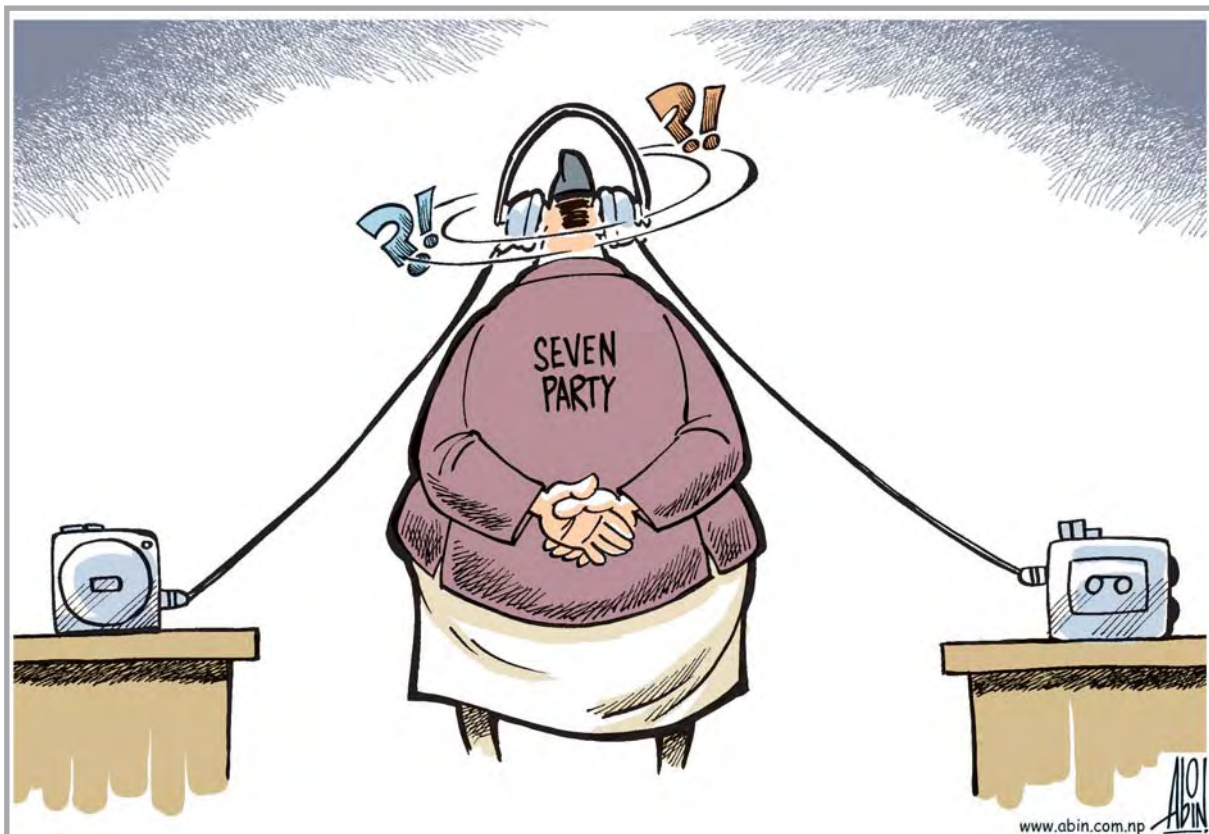
Nepal has been acting like a tolerant and humanitarian host to the Bhutanese ever since they were driven out by the Bhutan king in early 90s. Bhutani refugees of Nepali origin have it deeply imprinted on their minds that the ethnic cleansing was carried with the tacit understanding of the government of India, which not only allowed its soil for the exodus of Bhutanese to Nepal, but also slammed the door when they tried to go back.

India's role on the refugees' issue is deficient on two counts: firstly, on humanitarian grounds as it refused to play host to the Bhutani refugees who first sought refuge in the country. This was in clear contrast to the generosity India showed in the past when it gave shelter to Burmese, Afghans, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans. Secondly, it ostensibly supported Bhutan's rigidly anti-refugee line when Nepal tried its best to seek a negotiated settlement bilaterally.

By stating that it is a bilateral problem which Nepal and Bhutan should sort out, India has only been endorsing Bhutan's passive participation in the negotiation that only delays the solution. India both as a democracy and a country involved in the issue must play a just and humane role. It would be a loss of face even for India that the US and other global humanitarian players should be rescuing the refugees from the region.

For Bhutan which has been going through a massive democratisation process with first ever parliamentary election due next year, it will only be a farce to keep more than 100,000 citizens away from the entire process on the basis of ethnicity and religion. It will only be appropriate for the visiting US Assistant Secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, Ellen Saubrey to impress upon India and Bhutan authorities to insist that the refugees' first right is to get back their home.

Despite the humanitarian gesture the US and other countries have shown in resettling the Bhutani refugees, they must make it clear to the dragon kingdom that it is in no way a reward or endorsement of its policy of ethnic cleansing. It is also time India told Bhutan very clearly that Bhutan's journey to democracy will be meaningless if it is indifferent towards the right, dignity and safety of its citizens now living as refugees.



Letters

Biased views

Thomas A marks interview (issue 39) was no doubt readable, but it had a lot of bias against the Maoist movement and the party's joining the peace process. Yes, there are many activities on the part of the Maoists that go clearly against the spirit of the peace process, but if at all it appears fragile today, one should not blame only the Maoists for that.

The GP Koirala led Nepali Congress as well as the CPN-UML are also equally responsible for having tried to sideline the Maoists and creating a situation to stall the polls to the constituent assembly. It is also much bigger failure on the part of these political parties not to be able to exhibit the authority of the state when the Maoist cadres, especially the YCL activists go astray.

Theoretically, its great studying how similar or different are the Nepali Maoists from the similar breed across the world. But Nepali Maoists came to join the peace process on admission that the continuation of the armed insurgency would not take them closer to power. That may not be entirely tactical as Dr Marks would want to suggest. He should at least be admitting that it is much larger failure on the part the major parliamentary political parties who are responsible for the current fragile state of the peace process.



■ **CM Shrestha**
Sanepa, Kathmandu

Why not writing?

My friends and I have been following reports on Newsfront via pdf files that have been forwarded by friends and later through direct access online. We look forward to each new issue. In particular we have been following the articles by Ms. Sushma Amatya, so it has come as a major disappointment that her contributions are no longer forthcoming.

Is she no longer in your panel of writers? Her articles are very

educative and impart great knowledge and as such have touched us deeply. Her black and white prints are amazing. We would be grateful if we could communicate our admiration for her photography and writings directly.

Another major issue that we would like to bring to your attention is that we are unable to access earlier issues. Perhaps your software needs to be upgraded.

■ **Rodru Rai & friends**
New York, USA

Bhattarai narrative

Vijay Kumar's personal account of K P Bhattarai, his politics and persona, was a great piece that one does not get to read so often in the media.

Despite the author saying right at the beginning that his liking for Bhattarai might make him biased, he has objectively analysed the political line that Bhattarai has pursued in his commitment towards democracy. But it is equally sad to conclude that those with some principles and character lose their relevance in current day politics while those without it succeed. The author quotes Bhattarai as having said that god will not allow GP Koirala to leave the world with the fake greatness that he has acquired, but is silent on what he thinks about that line.

Does Vijay feel that Koirala is a relevant politician? Any way, he deserves praise for having brought out many things, both personal and private, to the public which not only makes the write up interesting but also shows what Bhattarai is made of.

■ **Kundan Sharma**
Anam Nagar, Kathmandu

Readers, your reactions, criticisms, comments, suggestions are most welcome. Please address it to:

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Spiritual Corner

Arrow of love

Bulleh Shah was a Punjabi Sufi mystic believed to have lived from 1680 to 1758. As is a common practice in South Asian poetry, his poems include a signature line which contains his name. Bulleh Shah was settled in Kasur, now in Pakistan. His spiritual master was Shah Inayat Qadiri of Lahore.

Bulleh studied Islam and became a great scholar. However on meeting his master, he became absorbed in a passionate longing for the divine. So great was his desire for union with god that he frequently exhibited unorthodox behaviour such as weeping openly. This behaviour drew scorn and rebuke from his friends and family.

His poetry richly portrays his divine experiences. The tomb of Bulleh Shah is in Kasur, and he is held in reverence by all Sufis of India and Pakistan.

Bulleh Shah poems:

A.
Bullah has fallen in love with the lord.
He has given his life and body as earnest.
His lord and master is Shah Inayat who has captivated his heart.



My life is a sacrifice unto Him.
You alone exist; I do not, O beloved!

B.
You alone exist; I do not, O beloved!
You alone exist, I do not!
Like the shadow of a house in ruins,
I revolve in my own mind.
If I speak, you speak with me:
If I am silent, you are in my mind.
If I sleep, you sleep with me:
If I walk, you are along my path.
Oh Bulleh, the spouse has come to my house:

C.
I have been pierced by the arrow of love, what shall I do?
I can neither live, nor can I die.
Listen ye to my ceaseless outpourings,
I have peace neither by night, nor by day.
I cannot do without my beloved even for a moment.
I have been pierced by the arrow of love, what shall I do?
The fire of separation is unceasing!
Let someone take care of my love.
How can I be saved without seeing him?
I have been pierced by the arrow of love, what shall I do?



Maoists leaders in the parliament

Pic by Eshwar Ojha

Sleepwalking towards democracy



■ Dr. Hari Bansha Dulal

...Allowing the current government to continue is like rewarding failure..



PM Koirala

With the suspension of Constituent Assembly elections, the current Seven Party Alliance (SPA) government has lost both the moral authority to claim itself as a peoples' government and the right bestowed by the April uprising to rule the nation. It has by all measures failed to achieve what it was supposed to achieve: peace, stability, and democracy.

The saddest part of the ongoing worst form of political melodrama is that, whatever fire for democracy once burned in the belly of the Nepali people, seems to have grown cooler, if not frozen due to the incompetence and inaction of the SPA government and betrayal of the Maoists.

Girija Prasad Koirala should have resigned the very day he suspended the CA polls. By adhering to the power even after failing to do what he was meant to do in the first place, he has set another precedence of reckless political adventurism. These acts weaken democracy. If he were in a corporate world, he would have been fired long ago for not being able to deliver. You can't remain in charge and not deliver. It simply does not make any sense.

Suspension of CA elections is a disaster and heads should roll. If the current SPA government continues, it will have little ability, to impose on its people the sacrifices which may be necessary to ensure peace, stability, and democracy in Nepal. Furthermore, allowing the current government to continue is like rewarding failures. Once you start doing that, politicians will start enjoying failures. There remains no incentive to get things right. This kind of precedence destroys the self selection process of democracy. The political system will lose its ability to flush out incompetent and unaccountable politicians. As a result of which the political arena will remain flooded with incompetent and

reckless politicians.

Some may argue that Girija Prasad Koirala is the only man who can get us out of the current mess. But if we analyse his current stint as a premier, there is no basis to remain convinced that he will eventually get us out of this mess. The unrealistically optimistic lot should understand that, able leaders are born during times of crises.

What Nepal needs today is, leaders with new strategies, vision, and physical ability, who can energise the democratic base before the Maoists get successful in overwhelming the system and creating a political vacuum which they want to fill. We need a set of leaders who will refuse to act as 'useful idiots' at the hands of the Maoists.

By now, it must have been evident to the so called intellectuals, armchair revolutionaries, and the likes that the main goal of the Maoists in Nepal is to establish a proletarian communist state by changing the rules of engagements and shifting the goal posts. They do not want elections in Nepal. All they want to do is to destroy parliamentary democracy through crude violence and replace it with a Maoist people's democracy without giving Nepali people the right to self-determination.

The current government should be replaced by a national unity government. All those that are outside the SPA alliance should be included in the new government. There are no permanent friends and enemies in politics. We can join hands with those that are outside the SPA alliance for the greater good of the nation. As a matter of fact, when we can 'kiss and make up' with the people that are responsible for killings of 13,000 innocent Nepalese, we can and should cut a deal with those that are outside the

SPA and which are by all measures a lesser threat to peace, stability, and democracy than the Maoists.

After a new national unity government is formed, it should negotiate with the bewildered rebellions such as Jay Krishna Goit, Nagendra Paswan, and the likes of Limbuan and Khumbuan. The new government should give Madhesis, Dalits, and indigenous people the rights they deserve without any reservations. Why hold back until they protest? The government should get its army and police force re-validated and get it functioning efficiently.

The ongoing appeasement process should come to an end. It neither secured peace, nor consolidated democracy in Nepal but only resulted in bloodshed, creating factions, and squandering of tax payers' hard earned money. Simple and effective rule of winning any game is that if a strategy doesn't work, replace it with the well tested and victorious ones.

Maoists have been exposed for what they are. People are fed up with them. There cannot be a better time for a mass mobilisation against them if Maoists do not want to stop their duplicity and dirty games. India and other international actors that are actively engaged in shaping the political future of Nepal must have learnt a lesson of trying to force a marriage between two ideologically irreconcilable parties. As long as the Maoists' proletarian dreams are kept alive, they will not embrace multi-party inclusive democracy in Nepal.

If the politicians of SPA continue to act as idiots and succumb to 22-point demands of the Maoists, it will be suicidal for the parliamentary democracy in Nepal. It will be the last nail in the SPA's political coffin and the prospects of Nepali people to enjoy life, liberty, and prosperity will remain an illusion!

(hbdulal@gmail.com)



Flying on wi

I wanted a ritual that made my father and everyo

■ Ellen Coon

A faint red mark remains visible on my forehead for several days after the Dasain festival, and, though I wash my face normally, I don't try to scrub it off. I'm proud of that red mark. To me, as a Westerner, it is a badge of honor, a sign to all of the relationships I have with Nepali elders who treat me as family. Bowing down, I give my

respect to those senior to me. In return, they give me their blessing with the red Tika. That beautiful exchange binds us to one another and nourishes the soul.

When my father turned 80 this year, I wanted to go beyond the usual American party that, however well-meaning, involves nothing more than eating, drinking and a few toasts. I wanted

a ritual that acknowledged the gifts of old age. I wanted a ritual that made it easier to express love and respect. And I wanted a ritual that made my father and everyone else feel transformed. I wanted a Bura Janko.

It wouldn't be possible for me to reproduce the Bura Janko ritual in all its details, as I have observed it among Newars. The ritual as it is

practiced here takes months of preparation, at least two days of active ritual, and a priest. My job, instead, was find what was most essential in the ritual and translate it into an American context.

To emphasize that this was not an ordinary birthday party, but an honoring of elders, I included my mother, who is 78, and my aunt, who is 82, in the Bura Janko. They are lucky enough to live west of Washington, DC in Rappahannock County, Virginia, in a rural community of artists, writers, and former high-ups in the government. None of the guests had ever heard of a Bura Janko, so I handed out a flyer which explained the ceremony and the order of events.

I wrote:

It is believed that those among us who have passed the age of 77 years and 7 months are no longer mere mortals, but are becoming gods, or Dyas. Three family members with us today have reached this milestone. What can Dyas (gods) do that humans can't? They can fly. During the ceremony, we give our elders a taste of flying by carrying them in palanquins decorated with winged horses.

As their bodies and all material existence are carried into the future by their strong descendants, our elders' minds and hearts are free to fly like the winged horse, enabling them to see farther than the rest of us. Our far-seeing and insightful elders become a treasure for the community: a resource for us all. This is such a powerful and auspicious occasion that all of the Dyas come. With the Dyas welcoming new gods into their midst, such positive force is generated that whatever wish you keep in your heart today is sure to come true.





inged horses

ne else feel transformed. I wanted a Bura Janko.

(Photo 1) Before the party, family members prepared the palanquins, or Khats. I had brought woodcarvings from Bungamati and pictures of winged horses and other decorations from Nepal. We used sturdy chairs for the Khats because Americans are much fatter than Newars!

(Photo 2) After the elders arrived and were seated under a tree, we had a 'convocation of the gods.' Members of a local dance troupe, wearing handmade masks, welcomed my parents and aunt with light, incense, and a Pyakhan, or sacred dance.

(Photo 3) We dressed our father in a special vest and turban, and our mother and aunt in red scarves. Then the sons gave our parents coral and pearl to wear to symbolize that from now on, they ride the chariots (Rath) of the sun and the moon. Newars who have had their Bura Janko wear gold earrings with coral and pearl beads. Since my father doesn't have pierced ears, we gave him a magnificent coral Ganesh brooch surrounded by pearls.

(Photo 4) This part surprised me. I explained to all the guests that children and grandchildren were going to pour milk on our parents' feet, bow to them, and receive their blessing. This is not part of American culture, so I didn't expect others to do it. But everybody wanted to do it! It took a long time, as people poured out their love to the elders. The elders could give the traditional blessing by dipping a bundle of flowers into the milk and sprinkling it, or they could use the alternative of a water gun, as is used here during the Holi festival. They used both which made everybody laugh.

(Photo 5 on front page) Next it was time for the

palanquin procession. Grandsons and others lifted the elders for a procession around the garden. Fear turned to exhilaration as the elders discovered the joyous freedom of flying. The little children ran ahead scattering flowers and rice grain.

(Photo 6) When the palanquins come back to earth, the elder is no longer the same person. Newars recognize this by having a senior

daughter in law do the Laskus formal welcome back into the house, complete with a large key. My sisters-in-law welcomed my parents and aunt back through a decorated archway.

Every ritual is celebrated with a feast, and this one was no exception. We had wonderful food and drink, and even a cake decorated with flying horses. At this time, people made speeches, sang

songs, recited poems they had written and offered toasts to our elders. My father made the first speech. It was a speech of thanks – not only to the guests present, but most importantly to all the Nepalis who had taught us so much. Afterward, many of the guests thanked me, some with tears in their eyes, for a transformative event.

(Ellen Coon's father, Carleton S. Coon, was US Ambassador to Nepal from 1981-1984.)



Scary surnames

Just because they humiliate me, I do not want to humiliate myself.

■ Uday Pariyar

Margaret Sandra's article, Nameless State, in The Guardian, describes the challenges she continues to face after she decided to cut out her family name 30 years ago. As a young feminist and social activist, she found it appalling that she had to associate herself either with her father or divorced husband through her surname. She dropped her family name altogether at the cost of lost family lineage.

Despite many troubles with official documents and procedures, she managed to stick to her decision. She believed it was a new type of social movement she started for the freedom of women from male domination. She now finds it rather frustrating that her campaign failed to gather steam even in the 21st century. On the contrary, she still finds it difficult to live without her surname due to the official requirements for one. Modern computers and machines would not register her for anything unless she used her full name. She has been using XXXX as her first name and Margaret Sandra as her family name to satisfy the machines.

The article reminded me of many occasions when I had been asked for my surname while being introduced. Even some highly educated people I encounter in Kathmandu ask me straightaway – "What is your Thar (caste)"? I find such common questions very offending. Clearly, they want to view me through their

caste lens and decide which layer of social strata I belong to.

"Why do you want to know my caste and not my full name?" I ask with irritation. Some get angry and usually the response would be, "Don't feel bad about it, but still what is your surname?" Defeated, I tell them I am a Damai. And they often fire back, "You are probably lying. You don't look like a Damai. You look like a Bahun!" Such humiliating assumptions on my identity infuriate me. I keep asking them how an actual Damai is supposed to look like.

Racial difference usually is obvious due to physical characteristics. For instance, nobody would be mistaken a Gurung for a Bahun. But the case is different for so-called untouchables like me because we look no different than Bahuns and Chhetris. Our facial and other physical structures look very much the same. The Madhesi Dalits cannot be easily separated from other Madhesis. Some Pahadis living for a long time in Terai cannot be easily distinguished from local Madhesis. In such difficult cases, the only tool available for identifying the caste backgrounds is to ask for your surname. This ongoing trend often acts as a public

humiliation for the people of low caste.

No wonder, many Dalits see their family names as a key factor for inviting humiliation and discrimination. Some members of the Dalit community will tell you only their first names when asked. Many Dalits have developed all sorts of ways to find a more honourable surname in place of their real surnames that expose them to discrimination and domination.

One of the common ways is to try and have the surnames same as those of Bahuns or Chhetris, a process I call Bahunisation.

A vantage point is that some of our sub-caste names are same or similar to

that of the high castes. For instance, we have a Dalit party activist from eastern Nepal whose caste is Gotame. He made a slight alteration and changed it to Gautam. Although he claims to be a very strong defender of Dalit rights, his landlords are told he is a Bahun. He fears he might not be given the room for rent if his true identity is revealed. However, he has already served in the Dalit Commission, nominated by his party. The trick is to hide your identity under cover of Bahunisation but to reveal your true identity when you are likely to get an opportunity

as a member of the low caste community.

This may sound cynical, but it is true and probably quite justifiable in a caste ridden society like ours. But personally, I think this is a bad idea. If we believe we are entitled to live a dignified life as a human being like any one else, we should start to take pride in our identity first. Surely, I want liberation from the social stigma, discrimination and injustices but not at the cost of my identity.

True, many might see me as a polluted or an impure person due to my ascribed status, but I have complete faith in the fact that their perceptions are wrong. Just because they humiliate me, I do not want to humiliate myself. So, I wish to retain my obvious family name and not Bahunise it for a false sense of liberty. Ironically, many so-called Dalit activists, Dalit rights defenders and leaders are the ones who often hide their identities.

Probably this is the reason why Margaret failed as a social campaigner. Family names do expose oppressed people to humiliation and suffering. But what really needs to be changed is not your family name but people's perceptions. One of the key factors that is holding the untouchables back is their low self-esteem. Getting rid of your own surname only shows how weak your self-respect is. This is something those advocating Dalit rights need to understand and start acting upon.

(ud.pariyar@gmail.com)

Nobody would be mistaken a Gurung for a Bahun. But the case is different for so-called untouchables like me because we look no different than Bahuns and Chhetris.

देशको तात्कालीन
कार्यदिशाका बारेमा तपाईं
के सोच्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?



अनि राजनेताहरु के सोच्दै होलान् ?



शुभशंकर कँडेलको साथमा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको दृष्टिकोण
कार्यक्रम

OUTLOOK

मा

हरेक शनिवार साँझ ८:१५ बजे
मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा



सगरमाथा

समाचारको शिखर नेपालको गौरव

Pak under emergency spell

Musharraf was targeting opposition leaders like the deposed Prime Minister Nawaj Sharrif who called the president a 'terrorist'.

President Gen Parvez Musharraf declared a state of emergency, sweeping ban on private media and sacked Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary, holding collaboration between the rising Islamic extremism and judiciary as the cause behind the drastic move, almost two months ahead of the general elections in the country.

Soon after the state of emergency was declared across the country on Saturday, military took positions in vulnerable parts of the country while authorities went on a spree rounding up opposition leaders, judges and lawyers. All communication lines have been suspended and censorship imposed on the media giving full immunity to the army to carry out the orders of the state.

Chief Justice Chaudhary who was to deliver the judgment on validity of Musharraf's re-election as president recently was sacked and put under House arrest. Justice Hamid Dagar was appointed as the new CJ. "Rising Islamic extremism," Musharraf said

was responsible for this drastic act. In a nationwide broadcast, he also blamed the judiciary for fuelling extremism by liberally freeing those involved in extremists backed explosion.

Musharraf refused to heed the international warning against such an 'extra-constitutional move', but the reaction coming from the United States and India were not too harsh. US government has decided not to stop the security assistance that it has been providing to the Musharraf government to combat Islamic terrorism.

India's official response much more subdued. "We regret the difficult time that Pakistan has been passing through. We trust the condition of normalcy would soon return permitting Pakistan's transition to democracy and stability to continue," said Navtej Sarna, India's spokesperson on external affairs.

There was also a visible difference among the top leaders of India's main



opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). While former Foreign Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha criticised it as dictatorial move, and as a last ditch attempt to save his chair by Gen Musharraf, the party's senior leader L K Advani said while what happened in Pakistan was a matter of deep concern, "the struggle for democracy and struggle against terrorism are inseparable in Pakistan."

The US response was stronger compared to that of India. "This action is very disappointing," Mr. Johndroe said. "President Musharraf needs to stand by his pledges to have free and fair elections in January and step down as chief of the army staff before retaking the presidential oath of office." US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that Gen Musharraf's decision to declare a

statement of emergency in Pakistan was 'highly regrettable.' But there are no indications of any sanction against the emergency rule.

At home, along with his diatribe against extremism, Gen Musharraf was also targeting opposition leaders like the deposed Prime Minister Nawaj Sharrif who called the president a 'terrorist'. But the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) appeared to be in a persuasive mood.

PPP Chief Benazir Bhutto said, "I believe General Musharraf and people who are under him want to use this emergency to delay elections and they want to delay elections for at least one to two years," she said. Bhutto asked the international community to put pressure on Musharraf to reverse his decision so that free and fair elections could be held.

Reports from Pakistan suggested that private TV channels have been taken off air, and forces have been deployed at the Supreme Court. ■

Avoid Dalai meet, ministers told

The Manmohan Singh government's decision to ask ministers to keep away from a programme to felicitate Tibetan leader Dalai Lama on his return from US, where he received the Congressional gold medal, has sparked a major controversy as the directive is seen to be driven by a desire to kowtow to Chinese sensibilities.

The Dalai Lama, regarded by Tibetans and many other Buddhists as their spiritual head, was feted in the Capital at a function organised by the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Parliamentary Forum on Tibet. It was widely attended by politicians, civil rights activists, media persons and the Tibetan community.

But while the Dalai Lama is a popular figure in India and abroad, fear of rubbing the Chinese the wrong way seems to have prompted the government to signal to ministers that it would not be a good idea to attend a function organised to commend a figure regarded by Beijing as a "splittist". Given China's sharp animosity towards the Dalai Lama, a circular was issued asking ministers to avoid the function.

Delhi chief minister Shiela Dikshit also called off her appearance with her officials citing a sudden engagement. This was communicated to JD(U) MP Basisht Narain Singh who is convenor of the Parliamentary Forum on Tibet. "I do not understand the necessity for such a directive. After all this was a



non-political function where there were no party affiliations on display," he said.

Singh argued that Tibetans had made India their home for decades and India could take some pride in the recognition offered to Dalai Lama. He also said that it should be understood that India was a democratic country which did not ban associations as long as they were peaceful and law abiding. "We should encourage Dalai Lama and China to settle their differences. We must explain to China that issues cannot be gagged in a democracy," he said.

The Dalai Lama refused to be drawn into the controversy. When asked whether ministers should have been present, he said, "I don't think so, this is a private function." But an organiser said that ministers had cried off, citing some reason or the other.

(Times of India)

UN envoy re-visits Myanmar

The United Nations secretary-general's special envoy Ibrahim Gambari re-visited Myanmar on Saturday for the second time at the invitation of the Myanmar government on his special mission to go on with U.N.'s mediation efforts for the country's national reconciliation.

Sent by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Gambari arrived here Saturday afternoon on a six-day re-visit after touring six Asian nations in the second half of last month and making consultations with regional partners of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, China and Japan about the situation in Myanmar.

Shortly after landing at the

Yangon International Airport, Gambari proceeded his trip directly to the new capital of Nay Pyi Taw to meet government leaders, and will then meet Aung San Suu Kyi later in Yangon, detained leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

Expecting continued cooperation of the Myanmar government, Gambari will follow up on his offer to facilitate implementation of the recommendations made to the government during his last mission, Michael Montas, an UN spokesperson, said before his second Myanmar trip.

Gambari will also follow up on implementation of confidence-building measures, including the possibility of establishing a participatory constitu-

tional review mechanism and a broad-based poverty alleviation commission, Montas said, adding that Gambari will consult with a broad range of representatives of Myanmar society, including all the groups which he was not able to see last time.

Surprisingly, a day ahead of Gambari's second Myanmar trip, Myanmar openly criticized a UN country team's statement over the humanitarian situation of the country issued on Oct. 24 on the occasion of the UN Day, refuting that the facts on economic, social, health and education sectors mentioned in the statement are not based on firm evidences or true data.

(People's Daily Online)

Wounded Tigers



The Tiger has been badly wounded. Not necessarily a good news, as retaliation is likely anytime now. But, Sri Lanka has seen it all in the past three decades; and, for a change, as is proven again in the killing of top LTTE leader Tamilselvan, the administration is showing the boldness to take on the rebels, and

with some spectacular successes. Here, now, is a turning point.

Note the fact that the slain leader, who headed the political wing of the separatist group, was second only to Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran; and that, the military's aerial bombardment took place where the rebel leaders were holding

a meeting. Such a successful zeroing in had not been in the military's past record. This is indicative of the new-found aggressiveness of Sri Lanka's once-dormant offensive mechanisms.

This is the hour of reckoning for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. On the one side, their cause is justified in as much that the majority in Sri Lanka, the Buddhists, hadn't given the minorities a just or humanitarian deal, resulting in the overall chaos for the past over 30 years. At the same time, having pressed their point, through massive bloodletting, of course, their rebel outfit, the LTTE, should have seen reason too. It could, from a position of strength, have struck a peace deal. Instead, the fighting went on, and on; and that's to the Tamils' disadvantage too.

Without doubt, the LTTE has a well-trained, largely-equipped and battle-hardened cadre. When Prabhakaran comes up with a statement on his deputy's killing, retaliation is going to be his answer.

(Khaleej Times)

Are we safe?

While Prachanda lounges in a fortified residence, his men go around abducting, intimidating



■ Siddhartha Thapa

How safe and secure are we? This is the most pertinent question one should give time and thought to. With the escalation in crime rates and the increasing lawlessness in the country; it is now evident that we are no longer safe under the SPA-M security umbrella.

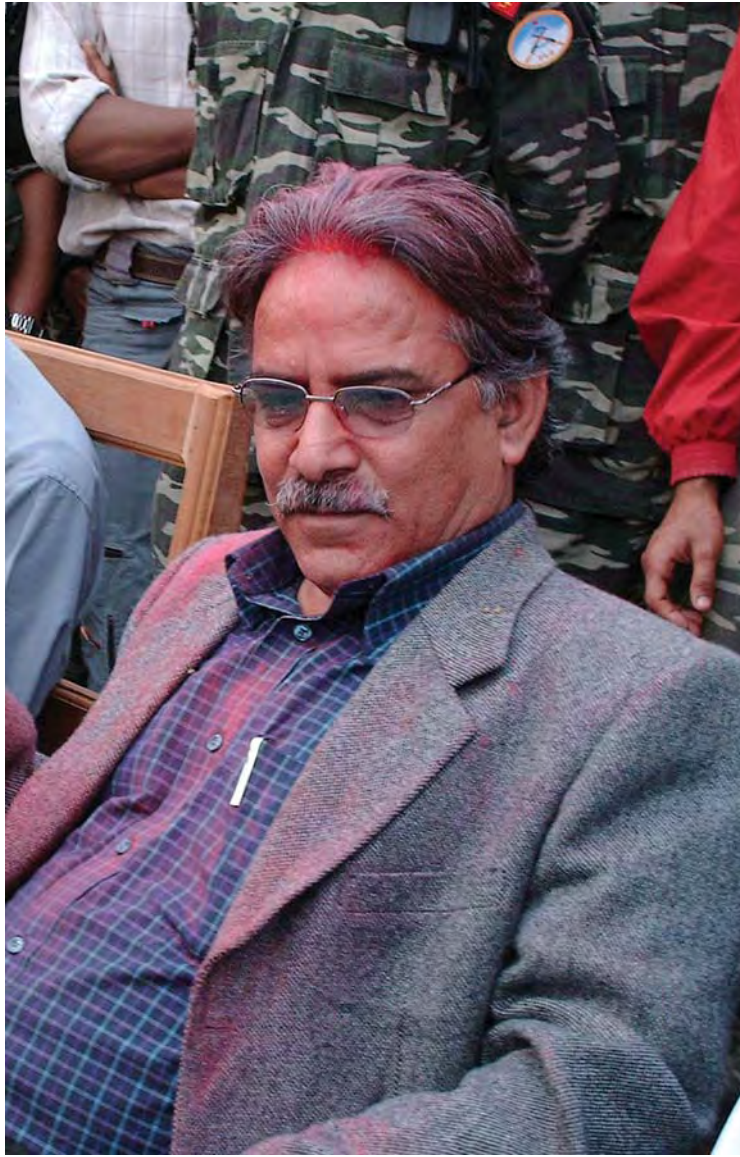
Although the restoration of democracy was a motivating factor propelling people to join the demonstrations to revolt against the king's rule, however; the underlying reason for the people to support the SPA-M revolt was in the hope that the alliance would end the war and bring lasting peace in the country. Unfortunately, SPA-M leaders have failed on both counts.

What is most worrying is that the political parties, international community, civil society, and the media remain unmoved of the killings and intimidation of ordinary citizens and political opponents. The irony is that when a member of a ruling party coalition is subjugated to any form of violence, not only does it make to the press but there is also considerable hyperbole attached to the drama. For instance, when the Maoist trade union cowardly disrupted the distribution of Kantipur there was concerted efforts from the prime minister to the Maoist chief to end the saga.

However, at the same time the YCL were also engaged in humiliating and intimidating members indicted by the Raymajhi Commission. Both Kantipur and people indicted by the Raymajhi Commission were victims of the same group and yet only one group received reprieve, while the other were left to fend for themselves. Concurrently, what happens when ordinary citizens of Nepal and countless number of people belonging to lesser influential political circles lose their lives or fall prey to organized violence – nothing.

There are countless number of stories of ordinary people, let alone royalists who have fallen as preys to organised crime in the recent past. Examples are plentiful, but these voices have been abandoned. Now perhaps it is time to listen to these voices and seriously question ourselves: are we actually safe and secure? To provide a more visual picture of what's going on in the city, it makes sense now to divulge on the details of a few incidents that can best describe the lawlessness in the city.

There is however a point I would like to make vis-à-vis political revolutions and the present peace process. Although heinous in nature



Pic. by newsfront

No matter how much our leaders may want to delude us about the peace process and the elections, the country however, from the underneath is falling apart.

and condemnable in every sense, the Madesh group that took responsibility of planting the bombs in Kathmandu almost a month and half ago perhaps feel that their act was a part of a process to full fill their agenda – a part of their revolution. There is no difference between them and the Maoists. If the Maoists could get away so easily by justifying their killings of thousands of unarmed civilians in the name of a revolution, so too could other groups, couldn't they? And besides, the Madesh is the most neglected section of Nepali politics. Therefore, these are moral issues that one must ponder over.

Today, Prachanda lounges in a heavily fortified residence in the city's sprawling tourist district. Although Prachanda received security from PLA men, he asked the government for additional security. While Prachanda lounges in a fortified residence, his men go around abducting, intimidating, and in some cases killing unarmed civilians and

political opponents. The 'fierce one' certainly loves his life more than anything else and is scared to death, hence, the plea for additional security. Isn't it an irony?

No matter how much our leaders may want to delude us about the peace process and the elections, the country however, from the underneath is falling apart. The debate has certainly gone past the 'democratic' jargon. Ultimately, the Maoist would have to camouflage RIM and COMPOSA (global and South Asia regional umbrella organisation of militant left movement) to successfully enter main stream politics, but it is unlikely that they will opt for a divorce with their ideological mother parties. There lies the key for the peace process and elections to happen.

After the Maoists attacked Kantipur, a debate should have ensued. But more importantly, atrocities, killings and intimidations should make it to the front pages of news papers. Only then will there be an increase in the level of awareness and it is then the perpetrators will restrain their actions fearing retaliation from the press and the people.

The grace period is certainly over and it is time that the supremacy of common law prevails. The failure to act to arrest the lawlessness in the country by the political actors will inevitably lead to anarchy. The symptoms of anarchy are already there, but there is still hope, the country hasn't yet transcended into a complete state of anarchy. ■

Bare facts of prostitution

Urgent need for separate authorised red light area

■ Rajeeb Tamrakar

"Prostitution Free Area"- I had to translate to a foreigner friend who asked me about the contents in the banner displayed right next to the main entrance of the Bir Hospital, Nepal's oldest government hospital. It was rather difficult for me to answer my friend's query if other lanes and streets of Kathmandu are permitted to carry out flesh trade, although Nepal has yet to declare any government approved 'red light areas.'

Upon making inquiries with the hospital staff about the banner, it came to my understanding that local clubs and organisations took the initiative with the assistance of Maoist affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) to launch the campaign to prevent commercial sex workers (CSWs) and their clients to carry out their business around the hospital area.

The locals had to request the YCL to use their muscle power to prevent flesh trade in the hospital premises after several disputes between relatives of the patients in the hospital and those seeking services of CSWs were triggered off due to misunderstanding. There was also news published in a local newspaper about inconveniences faced by patients and their relatives due to the ongoing flesh trade in the area.

A police official on duty at the hospital said that as the sun goes down, hordes of CSWs and their clients through the area causing embarrassment to patients and their relatives. He related several incidents that caused confrontations as the clients seeking services of the CSWs mistakenly approached the family members of the patients who had to come out of the hospital to buy medicines and other necessities. "Even we were bothered by inebriated people while returning home after duty at night," said a female employee of the hospital.

Such stories are getting common in other parts of the city too where girls returning home from work or studies had to endure similar insults. Nepali society and the authorities still deny having any legally recognised brothels in the country despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of commercial sex workers are supporting their families through this occupation.

Recently, Badi community even shed their clothes at the gates of the chief secretariat, Singha Durbar where the prime minister's office is located, demanding their constitutional rights. They were demanding for an alternative source of livelihood so that they could give up the flesh trade, that is despised by the 'virtuous' community of the society who have been exploiting them for generations.

The time has come for the authority and the society to acknowledge the fact that prostitution is also a part of Nepali socio-economic establishment. One cannot deny the fact that there are places where flesh trade takes place in almost every locality of the country veiled under different labels such as message parlors, cabin restaurants and so on.

Such unauthorised establishments are leading to rise in social anomalies and aberrations. A large number of dance restaurants and massage parlors operating in Thamel area - the tourist hub of Kathmandu, are involved in prostitution. Several other locations in Kathmandu are now considered as red light areas by the locals implicitly. To avoid more complications, authorities now need to urgently address this issue by cleaning up residential areas and areas of work and setting authorised up red light areas. ■



Heritage sites

Priceless Patan

■ Pramesh Pradhan

Patan Durbar Square complex, in the centre of Patan city, consists of temples, monuments, palace and courtyards. It has denser concentration of monuments per square metre than in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur Durbar Squares. Lalitpur (literally the city of fine arts) is the official name possibly derived from the master crafts-



manship of Patan. Ashoka Pattan, Yala, Yupagram, Manigala, Lalitpatan and Lalitpuri were the names given to Patan at different times in its history.

In four cardinal directions stand stupas known as Ashokan Pillars believed to have been built by Emperor Ashoka in 250 BC. Archaeological evidence since 1st century AD is found in Patan. The city was founded in 299 AD by King Viradeva and is considered the earliest settlement in the valley which transformed into a town in the 10th century. Kings of Newar Malla dynasty and particularly Siddhinarasimha Malla contributed immensely to the city.

Patan was the home of some of the best architects Nepal ever produced including the grandmaster Arniko and master Abhayraj. Metal carving, woodcarving, handicrafts, medieval arts and architecture found in the city set it apart as one of the most picturesque areas in the valley.

The courtyard of Sundari Chowk (sunken bath - Tushahiti) is a blend of wood, metal and stone carving. The square is not open to public nowadays. Mul Chowk, the main courtyard used for official, religious and diplomatic ceremonies only, houses the temple of Taleju Bhawani, images of Ganga & Jamuna, premium woodcarving and unfortunate empty spaces of stolen images. The site of Keshav Narayan Chowk now houses the Patan museum. The museum supported by Austrian cooperation, displays a stunning collection of ancient and medieval icons, manuscripts and art; and is regarded as one of the best preserved museums in Asia.

Krishna temple, perhaps the best known icon for Patan stands at the centre of the square. The stone temple made in 1637, is a stunning example of Shikhara

temple. It has 21 pinnacles of different heights, four stories and every wall is filled with intricate carvings of Vishnu in his different incarnations. Vishwanath temple known for its erotic presentations, Bhimsen temple and Ganesh temple stand at the northern end of the square. The royal palace with the golden window, sunken bath of Mangahiti and Mani Mandap (pavilion of pearl) enrich

the complex.

16th century temple of Jagatnarayan (Charanarayan), Hari Shankar temple, octagonal stone Krishna temple of Chyasing Deval, Taleju bell used for important public announcements, Taleju temple, Deguttale temple, Narasingh, Ganesh and Hanuman statues at the southern corner are other treasures of the square.

The golden temple, Hiranyavarna Mahabihar built in the 12th century has been the centre of Buddhism in Patan for centuries. The three storied temple famous for its spectacular metal craft is a Vajrayana shrine. The five roofed temple of Kumbheswor temple built in 14th century is dedicated to Shiva and is perhaps the oldest temple in Patan. Myths say a small pond in the temple is connected with Gosaikunda, a sacred Himalayan lake. Saptamatrika (seven sacred mothers) and Kali temple of Banglamukhi are one of the most visited temples in the valley.

Mahabouddha is the temple of a thousand Buddhas. The 18 metre tall terracotta temple constructed in 16th century is an imitation of the Bodhagaya temple in India. Temple of Mayadevi (mother of Buddha) was believed to have been made with the remaining material of the main temple.

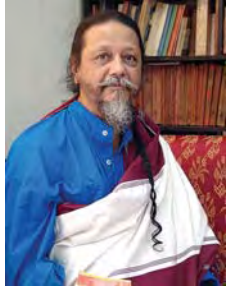
Unfortunate use of the Patan Durbar square for political gatherings and demonstrations, chaotic traffic, congested streets, construction of houses around the heritage site and rampant occupation of public space for business have undermined the architectural excellence of the city. Concerned authorities need to act upon these malaises urgently to preserve the site and attract more visitors.

(nre@mail.com.np)

Illusion of memory

Death is not the end of the mental continuum but only a change of the mental continuum.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche



Now let us go back to Shamatha after this explanation of rebirth and reincarnation. There are many questions regarding reincarnation which has not been dealt with yet; but let it be said that the Buddhist concept of reincarnation is neither unscientific nor scientific nor as baseless as materialists think. Although Hinduism and Jainism also believe in reincarnation, the Buddhist view of reincarnation is not exactly the same as the Hindu, Jain system.

Whereas in Hinduism and Jainism it is the same person or entity that is reborn again and again, the Buddhist view of Anatma contradicts such a notion. However, this does not mean there is no reincarnation at all in Buddhism. We shall discuss the various tenets of Buddhism later, however let me explain in short that it is not exactly the same person Hari Prasad or Ram Prasad who is born in the next life as one of the insights of proper Buddhist meditation is to see through the fact that 'Hari Prasad' is only a map of reality produced by culture / family / education / language / and the history of the person and not actually the territory itself.

In fact as per Buddhism there is no territory of the map but only the map. This is the concept of Anatma explained from an existential dimension. Since there is no Hari Prasad in reality but only a conceptual map based on culture / family / education / language and the history; there can be no question of that Hari

Prasad being reborn again. But then what is the meaning of reincarnation in such a case? For now, in short, reincarnation means simply the continuity of the mental continuum.

Death is not the end of the mental continuum but only a change of the mental continuum. Since the mental continuum is a name for the flow, and since the mental continuum by nature changes second by second and does not remain the same there is no entity / thing / person who remains the same even second by second what to speak of after death. It is the illusion of memory which connects separate discrete mind – moments and make them seem to be the same 'mind-stuff.'

Marshland Flowers

But if your Shamatha meditation practice goes deep enough then these memories which are carried forward can be reawakened, and the person knows from her / his own memory the fact of reincarnation. This memory can also be brought out through hypnotic trance. A similar thing can be said of Riddhi – Siddhis which is also another thing that the overly materialistic try to deny without any base.

These parts bring us to another topic called in modern psychological research as altered states of consciousness. To understand the phenomena of Siddhi – Riddhi (miraculous powers) and reincarnation, it is useful to understand the

concept of altered – states of consciousness.

The mind has many altered states and what we call normal waking state is only one of the states of mind. It is certainly not more true, real, accurate or suggestive of reality than the other states of mind. Various states of mind have various properties which are not available to the normal waking state of mind. Even the fact that we call the waking state as normal is only a culturally ingrained idea and it is not in reality more normal than other altered states of mind.

There are many kinds of altered states of minds which vary from what is considered as the normal waking mind. Hypnotic trance is a category of altered state of mind which differs from the normal waking state. I call it a category because within the categories there are many levels which are different from each other. If we were to give some degrees to the depth of hypnotic trance there would be a range one percent hypnotic trance to 100% hypnotic trance. What is available to a 98 – 100% hypnotic trance is not available to a 1 – 20% trance. At around 68 – 70% or so one could easily anaesthetise parts of one's own body so that it could be operated upon without anesthesia. That is simply not available to either the waking state or even 10 or 20% hypnotic trance.

(To be continued)
(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)



Tree shrouded in mist, Ilam, Nepal

BY Sushma Amatya



Bhaskar Ojha

Lankan victory

Sri Lanka won the Surya Nepal 9th SAARC Golf Championship. Sri Lanka won two matches last day and halved one to cumulate 5 points against Nepal's 1. The winning match was awarded two points and one point each for a halved march.

Tisa Chandradasha of Sri Lanka was on the match with Nepal's Tashi Ghale and won the match easily after 12 holes. Match between Rupak Acharya and K Prabakaran was the most exciting as Prabakaran won the first hole with birdie and Rupak matched with a birdie on the fifth.

In the match between Mithun Parera and Rabi Khadka - Mithun won the first hole with a par then made a birdie to win the 5th and again won the 7th with a par before losing the 8th For Rabi's par. In the Losers' match between, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India & Bhutan; the winning team was Bangladesh with an aggregate score of 1 under par.

India wins ladies title

Nalini Singh and Saweta Galande displayed

great exhibition of golf to dominate the ladies section to take the medal home. Sri Lanka's Dhanushi Senadhira and Niloo Jayatilake were able to hold their second position and Nepal's Kesang Lama and Shastika Shrestha finished fourth.

Friendship match

Mr. Wang Yi scored 39 stableford points to win the championship. Syed Rafiul Hasan from Bangladesh scored 37 to finish second and

Tendi Sherpa came third with 35 stableford points on the count back.

In ladies category, Kesang Lama and Eu Hazur Thapa

were tied at 32 stableford points. However Kesang had a better back nine (15) to Eu Hazur's (14), to grab the ladies title.

Min Gu Cho got both longest drive and closest to the pin award. And in the championship of team managers' Nepal's Team manager Rabindra Shrestha won the tournament. ■



Indian embassy wins again

Indian Embassy won the Soaltee Crowne Plaza super sixes continuously for the fifth consecutive term. The embassy defeated the Standard Chartered bank by 25 runs. Indian Embassy scored 65 runs losing three wickets whereas Standard Chartered could only muster 40 runs in final of the Soaltee Crowne Plaza super sixes cricket match on Saturday.

Arvind Bhattarai of the embassy team was awarded the man of the match in final and bagged the prize money of 25,000 rupees. Abhinash Chettri who scored 30 runs each in the last three matches was retired midway this time around. Yet he was declared the crown of the match of the series. To overcome the disappointment of the team, Shekhar Karki of Standard Chartered gave some of his best shots.

Indian Embassy had earlier defeated Kantipur Group to earn its place in the final whereas Standard Chartered defeated Kumari bank. Rohit Singh of Kumari bank has been declared best batsman and Mohan



Bhaskar Ojha

Khattri of Spice Nepal as the best baller man of the series. Abhinash also won a free trip to Hong Kong; the trip to be funded by Dragon Air. ■

Contemporary Batik

■ Sanchita Sinha Roy



Batik is an Indonesian word and refers to a generic wax-resist dyeing technique used on textile. The word originates from Javanese word Amba, meaning to write and the Javanese word for dot or point, Titik. The art of Batik reached its highest achievement in technique, intricate design, and refined aesthetic in Java, Indonesia. The island of Java has been well known for its exquisite batik for centuries, particularly in places such as Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, Cirebon, and Solo.

Melted wax is applied to cloth before being dipped in dye. A mixture of bees wax and



paraffin wax is used. The bee's wax will hold to the fabric and the paraffin wax will allow cracking, which is a characteristic of batik. Wherever the wax has seeped through the fabric, the dye will not penetrate. Thin wax lines are made with a canting needle, a wooden handled tool with a tiny metal cup with a tiny spout, out of which the wax seeps. Other methods of applying the wax onto the fabric include pouring the liquid wax, painting the wax on with a brush, and applying the hot wax to pre-carved wooden or metal wire block and stamping the fabric.

Sometimes several colors are used, with a series of dyeing, drying and waxing steps. After the last dyeing, the fabric is hung up to dry. Then it is dipped in a solvent to dissolve the



wax, or ironed between paper towels or newspapers to absorb the wax and reveal the deep rich colors and the fine crinkle lines that give batik its character.

Contemporary batik, while owing much to the past,

is markedly different from the more traditional and formal styles. For example, the artist may use etching, discharge dyeing, stencils, different tools for waxing and dyeing, wax recipes with different resist values and work with silk, cotton, wool, leather, paper or even wood and ceramics.

I decided to do my own experiments. In 1987 while working for an advertising agency I discovered how to manipulate Cow Gum (brand name) or rubber cement/ solution (as it is popularly known) in place of wax to get a wonderful resist technique that would resemble contemporary Batik methods.



In 2006 I did these abstracts of bamboo, water and cityscape among others.

(Sanchita's paintings are on sale. For details, contact the artist at: Phone: 00-91-9818803916 and sanchitasroy@gmail.com)



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